



DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
LT. GOVERNOR

KEVIN M. BURKE
SECRETARY

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
Department of Fire Services

P.O. Box 1025 ~ State Road

Stow, Massachusetts 01775

(978) 567~3100 Fax: (978) 567~3121



STEPHEN D. COAN
STATE FIRE MARSHAL

THOMAS P. LEONARD
DEPUTY STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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Contact: Jennifer Mieth, (978) 567-3380

Candle Safety Awareness Day is Monday, December 8, 2008

In observance of Candle Safety Awareness Day, proclaimed by the Legislature as the second Monday in December, State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan advises consumers to use candles safely during this holiday season, and throughout the year. Monday, December 8, 2008 will be Candle Safety Awareness Day this year.

Candle sales continue to increase, and consequently so does the risk of fires related to their unsafe use. Candle fires tripled in the 1990s from 93 in 1990 to a peak of 342 in 1999. State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan said, "Fortunately education efforts have shown results and candle fires have dropped three years in a row." In 2007, there were 146 candle fires reported to the Mass. Fire Incident Reporting System (MFIRS). These fires resulted in two (2) fatalities, 14 civilian injuries, seven (7) fire service injuries, and over \$5.1 million in property losses.

Ninety-two (92%) of candle fires occur in the home, as a result of leaving candles burning unattended, or placing them too close to combustible materials. In Massachusetts, during the years 1997-2007, over 2,600 candle related fire incidents occurred. However, from 1999 to 2007 the incidence of candle fires has dropped by 57%. This decline can be attributed to the efforts of public fire safety officials who recognized the problem and worked with the candle manufacturers to promote the safe use of candles.

Coan recommends using candles within a "Circle of Safety" in order to reduce the risk of fire. There are 5 components to completing the "Candle Circle of Safety",

- ◆ Burn candles within a one-foot circle, free of anything that can burn.
- ◆ Never leave candles burning unattended.
- ◆ Always extinguish candles after use.
- ◆ Use a non-combustible saucer or candleholder.
- ◆ Keep candles out of reach of children and pets.

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Coan said, “Many of the holidays celebrated at this time of year use candles. Unfortunately, with increased candle use at this time of year we also see a jump in candle fires. December 24th is the day on which the most candle fires occur. Please use practice safe candle use and keep candles away from holiday decorations.”

For additional information on candle safety visit the Department of Fire Services web page at www.mass.gov/dfs or contact the Fire Data and Public Education Unit at 978-567-3380 or toll-free at 1-877-9NO-FIRE (1-877-966-3472).